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Who's hitchhiking with you?

FEB 05, 2018 By [TONI PATERSON MW](#) In [WINE INSIGHTS](#)



Phylloxera bug (Photo: [Agriculture Victoria Rutherglen](#))

Have you ever snuck into your favourite vineyard to nab that perfect, insta-grammable pic? It's actually not a good idea to do so.

Vinehealth Australia, formerly known as the Phylloxera & Grape Industry Board of South Australia, has launched a new campaign aimed at educating travelling wine lovers about the dangers of [phylloxera](#) and the risks individuals pose to its spread.

Phylloxera is a vine aphid that attacks the roots of *Vitis vinifera* grapevines. It can be unwittingly transferred from vineyard to vineyard by a person's shoe or vehicle tyre. Once a vineyard is infested, the vines lose productivity and eventually die.

Although vines grafted onto resistant rootstocks are protected from phylloxera, the majority of South Australia's vines are susceptible to the pest as they are on their own roots. An outbreak of phylloxera would be devastating to the state's grape and wine industry.

According to [Vinehealth Australia's website](#), South Australia is designated as 'phylloxera-free', as is Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. While there is no phylloxera currently in Queensland, there were some isolated cases over fifty years ago. There are some regions in Victoria and New South Australia where phylloxera is present.

Awareness of the vine pest phylloxera is crucial to limiting its spread domestically and internationally.

Central to the [Vinehealth Australia's educational campaign](#) is a comical, yellow human-sized phylloxera, named Phil, who can be seen hitching rides with wine-lovers who are touring vineyards. Many wine tourists would be completely unaware of the potential risk that their visit poses to the health of the vines at their favourite winery.

So, when you visit a vineyard, adhere to the rules on the signage, head straight to cellar door and don't walk through the vines. Though if a winery has the correct equipment, you may be allowed to visit the vineyard after you clean your shoes with chlorine or wear shoe covers. Don't be offended if they ask you which other wineries you have visited, as rather than being nosy, they will just be trying to establish if you pose any significant risk.

Who's Hitchhiking With You?



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